

SUMMARY OF THE NELAC On-site Assessment Committee Teleconference September 30, 1996

The On-Site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Monday, September 30, 1996. Mr. Gary Bennett, chair of the committee, led the meeting. A list of Action Items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Bennett began the meeting with several announcements related to NELAC activities:

- ! Although an exact date has not been set, the interim meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in Washington, D.C., sometime in mid-to late January 1997. (*Note: The confirmed date, announced after this teleconference, is February 3-6, 1997, at the Bethesda (MD) Hyatt Regency.*)
- ! The next national conference will be held July 28 - 31, 1997, at the Wyndham Anatole, Dallas, TX.
- ! The NELAC standards approved at the July 1996 conference were scheduled to be placed on the NELAC bulletin board by September 13. None of the committee members had accessed the bulletin board to determine if the standards were available.

1997 GOALS

Mr. Bennett indicated that the primary charge of the On-site Assessment Committee for the coming year was to develop standards for assessor training and the assessor training manual. In addition, it will be necessary to reconsider Section 3.4.5 on Confidential Business Information (CBI). This section was returned to the committee for further consideration during conference voting.

Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC director, has indicated that there is money set aside for a contract to assist the committee in developing standards for the assessor training program and for the assessor training manual. Few details were available on the specifics of the contract implementation. The committee discussed how this contract would operate. It was noted that Mr. Steve Baker is chairing a subcommittee for assessor training. The committee members agreed that the committee has final approval authority on whether to incorporate the contractor's work product. Dr. George Dilbeck suggested that someone contact US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Drinking Water Technical Support Division to see how drinking water certification officer training would integrate with NELAC's training standards.

CHECKLISTS

The committee discussed whether the assessor training manual would contain checklists to be

used in the on-site assessment process. All agreed that this would be desirable. The committee discussed whether the checklists should be centered around a laboratory's quality system and be based on the NELAC quality system standards or whether they should be tailored to be both program- and method-specific. Employing either approach or a combination of the two is possible. Many committee members felt the States would prefer a program- and method-specific system of checklists in addition to a quality system checklist. It was stated that the particular approach for the checklists depends on how the Policy and Program Structure Committee develops its approach to accreditation. There was also discussion on how EPA's proposed Performance- Based Method System (PBMS) would interface with a method-specific checklist approach. There does not appear to be enough information available on PBMS at the present time for the committee to devise an approach.

REVISING SECTION 3.4.5

Section 3.4.5 on CBI was discussed briefly. The main point of the deliberations was whether the entire section needed major revisions or whether the phrase citing "client names and addresses" as examples of CBI needed to be added. This phrase was present in the June 1996 draft of the standard but was deleted by the committee prior to voting by the conference. Mr. Bennett agreed to examine 40 CFR Part 2 and submit a candidate section for the committee's consideration.

QUALIFICATION OF ON-SITE ASSESSORS

The final topic for discussion centered around a letter received from the State of Washington Department of Health regarding the qualifications of on-site assessors. The letter recommended adding a statement to the on-site assessment standard requiring assessors to have recent laboratory experience within the specific discipline being evaluated. The letter also stated that assessors should have access to or be connected to a laboratory that is involved in the analysis of samples in the discipline of their certification. The letter noted that the draft 4th edition of the *Manual for Certification of Laboratories Analyzing Drinking Water* requires EPA certification officers to have had recent bench experience.

The letter generated intense reaction from the committee members. One member stated that while the experience requirement would be the ideal, it might not always be practical. Another member indicated that this requirement might negatively impact State certification programs. A third member indicated that the training standard, when developed, might make this requirement unnecessary. Another member indicated that third-party assessors might find this requirement difficult to meet. The committee agreed not to propose the addition of such language to the standard at the present time.

NEXT MEETING

The next teleconference of the committee is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 5.

ACTION ITEM
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
September 30, 1996

Mr. Gary Bennett will examine 40 CFR Part 2 and submit a candidate section 3.4.5 for the committee's review.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
September 30, 1996

Name	Affiliation	Phone Numbers
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